

FULL-TIME FACULTY WORKLOAD POLICY
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
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Date of approval by the Department: 4/8/2026

Date of approval of the Dean: 6/26/2026

Date of Provost's approval: 7/13/2026

Overview

Annual workload for all full-time Marine and Environmental Science (MES) faculty members reflects the objectives of the Department of MES while maintaining alignment with the overall mission and goals of the College of Science and of the University. To this end, dedicated efforts to promote a mechanistic understanding of principles in the marine and environmental sciences are needed to address the major challenges that our world faces with respect to sustainability, biodiversity, global change, food resources, and pollution. As a department, we are therefore dedicated to:

- Creating knowledge that advances the fundamental understanding of diverse disciplines in the marine and environmental sciences and addresses critical societal needs.
- Developing the scientific and technical skillsets for the next generation of marine and environmental scientists (i.e., our students and postdocs), with an emphasis on equipping them to excel in rapidly changing, competitive environments.
- Delivering rigorous undergraduate programs that integrate experiential learning, classroom learning, cooperative education opportunities, and scientific research, and that are capable of evolving to reflect current scientific knowledge and workforce needs.
- Offering internationally recognized graduate programs that foster leadership in research, education, and service through challenging coursework, scientific discovery, communication of research findings, and expansion of interdisciplinary knowledge.

Annual workload for each full-time faculty member is allocated by percentages of professional time devoted to specific activities in the following categories: (1) teaching and education (collectively referred to hereafter as “teaching”); (2) research, scholarship, and creative activities (collectively referred to hereafter as “research”); and (3) service and community outreach (collectively referred to hereafter as “service”).

The allocation of professional time devoted to these categories varies based upon the type of position a faculty member holds. The following 2 target workload distributions best describe the majority of faculty positions that presently exist in the MES Department (i.e., Research and Teaching faculty):

Research Faculty:	54% Research	36% Teaching	10% Service
Teaching Faculty:	0% Research	90% Teaching	10% Service

Adjustments to these workload distributions will be made for parental leaves, family leaves, maternity/adoption leaves, medical leaves, sabbaticals, or similar situations in accordance with the appropriate University and College policies.

Preparation of Annual Workload Distribution Reports

Each faculty member shall prepare an Annual Workload Report, in conjunction with their annual merit report. The purpose of this Annual Workload Report for faculty is to quantify workload distribution with respect to a set of minimum and maximum thresholds in order to identify major discrepancies between target and actual workload distributions, and also to establish a procedure for remedying these discrepancies.

The Annual Workload Report for all full-time faculty shall consist of two sections:

(1) Workload distribution spreadsheet: Completion of a spreadsheet that assigns point values for faculty workload in all relevant categories (research, teaching, service) pursuant to the activities and weightings described in the MES Bylaws. Templates for these spreadsheets shall be distributed by the Department Executive Committee and/or Department Chair when the Merit Review Templates are distributed.

(2) Workload distribution narrative: Completion of a brief (i.e., 1 paragraph) narrative identifying: (i) underages (relative to minimum point thresholds) or overages (relative to maximum point thresholds) within each of the relevant workload categories (research, teaching, service), (ii) point overflow from eligible category(ies) with workload overages to eligible category(ies) with workload underages, and (iii) any requests, including a brief rationale, for faculty-initiated requests for adjustments to target workload distribution due to workload overages.

Although the Annual Workload Report will use categories and points similar to those used in the faculty's Annual Merit Report, the Annual Workload Report is explicitly not an assessment of merit (which is the purpose of the merit review), but is instead a tool for assessing whether the target workload distribution (i.e., that associated with a faculty member's job description) accurately reflects their actual workload distribution. This document also describes the procedures for Department- and faculty-initiated adjustments to a faculty member's target workload distribution.

Review of Annual Workload Reports

Each full-time faculty member's Annual Workload Report shall be reviewed annually by the Department Executive Committee and Department Chair, in conjunction with the Department Annual Merit Review process.

Adjustments to tenured faculty's target workload distribution due to workload underage

In any given year, should a tenured faculty member's workload fall below the minimum points for any category pursuant to their target workload distribution, and if that underage is not offset

by meeting the maximum threshold in category for that faculty member, then the faculty member shall receive notice of the underage from the Executive Committee and Department Chair as part of their annual evaluation. If the faculty member receives notice of workload underages in their annual evaluation for three consecutive years, then the Department Executive Committee and Departmental Chair may recommend, via written correspondence with the faculty member, adjustments in target workload distribution for that faculty member. Three years is deemed the minimum interval needed to eliminate the effects of natural cycles in funding beyond the faculty member's control and also to allow sufficient time for the faculty member to remedy workload underage(s) identified in their prior Annual Workload Reports. If the faculty member disagrees with the adjusted workload recommendations made by the Department Executive Committee and Department Chair, that faculty member has the option to file an appeal for consideration by the Department Executive Committee and Department Chair, who will render a decision on the adjusted workload recommended for that faculty member. The outcome of this appeal does not preclude the faculty member from taking additional steps as defined in the Faculty Handbook.

Procedure for returning to original target faculty workload distribution

In the case that a tenured research faculty member with an adjusted workload structure increases their workload in a given year with respect to the category(ies) that were previously below the minimum point value pursuant to their original workload distribution, then the faculty member will have the option to return to their original workload distribution at the start of the next academic year following submission of their Annual Workload Report documenting that they have exceeded the minimum workload points for each category pursuant to their original workload distribution in that year. The faculty member shall exercise this option by submitting written notice thereof to the Department Executive Committee and Department Chair.

Tenured faculty-initiated request for adjustments to target workload distribution

Tenured faculty members may also petition the Executive Committee and Department Chair to adjust their target workload structure. The Department Executive Committee and Department Chair will provide a written response to the faculty-requested adjustment in target workload distribution within one month of receiving the request. If the faculty member disagrees with the adjusted workload recommendation made by the Department Executive Committee and Department Chair, that faculty member has the option to file an appeal for consideration by the Department Executive Committee and Department Chair, who will render a decision on the adjusted workload requested by that faculty member via majority vote. If the vote results in a tie, then the Department Chair is responsible for rendering the final decision. The outcome of this appeal does not preclude the faculty member from taking additional steps as defined in the Faculty Handbook.

Teaching faculty-initiated request for adjustments to target workload distribution

Teaching faculty at the rank of Associate or Full Teaching Professor may initiate a request to adjust their target workload structure following the same procedure to that outlined above for tenured faculty.

Policy regarding adjustments to target workload distribution for tenure-track-faculty

All TT faculty members (i.e., Research Professors at the rank of Assistant Professor) will, with rare exception, have a fixed workload structure for their entire pre-tenure period that is exempt

from adjusted workload distributions arising from workload underages. TT faculty members may also be granted two course releases as part of their recruitment package. These exemptions are intended to afford the TT faculty the flexibility and freedom needed to meet the high standards for achieving tenure at Northeastern.

Criteria for reporting workload distribution

Research category

Scientific research is the primary activity of the Research faculty within the Department of MES. Although obtaining funding for research is an important component of maintaining an active scientific research program, it is recognized that scientific research takes the form of a wide range of activities and products. It is further recognized that all Research faculty may experience intervals of time in which they are not able to obtain external research funding yet are still able to maintain an active research program that contributes to scientific knowledge. Research categories and associated points are described in section I.C.5 of the MES Bylaws.

Teaching category

Teaching is a critical component of every faculty position within the Department of MES. It not only fulfills our professional duties as faculty at a tuition-driven institution, it also provides a vehicle for faculty to translate primary scientific research to the younger generations that will ultimately be responsible for solving society's challenges. A description of teaching categories, points, and general criteria is provided in section I.C.5 of the MES Bylaws. All tenured faculty members have the option to 'buy out' of teaching pursuant to college policy. The Department Chair or Dean can also grant course releases to tenured research faculty who have been given a disproportionately large service load, although this request (if initiated by the faculty member) should be made through the procedure described above (*Tenured faculty-initiated request for adjustments to target workload distribution*).

Service category

Service to the Department, College, and University is a critical component of all faculty positions at Northeastern. Not only does it advance the Department, College, and University through direct faculty contribution, it also provides a vehicle for faculty to engage and keep current with their employer on issues outside the scope of their typical research and teaching activities. In addition to serving on committees, all full-time faculty members are expected to attend and actively participate in all Department faculty meetings and retreats. All eligible faculty are expected to attend and participate in all Department Tenure and Promotion Committee review meetings when called. All faculty are also expected to participate in all relevant departmental activities, including self-studies and external reviews, faculty searches, colloquia, graduate student recruitment events and defenses, and the like. These efforts are critical to building and sustaining the Department in all areas of activity. A description of service categories, points, and general criteria is described in section I.C.5 of the MES Bylaws.

Modifications to workload distribution

To establish guidelines for evaluating major discrepancies between target and actual workload distributions for Research faculty within the Department of MES, minimum point thresholds for target workload categories (i.e., research, teaching, service) must be established for comparison against actual reported workload. Minimum thresholds in point values are set as those associated with the "Poor" categories in Merit Review (see MES Bylaws I.C.5). It should be noted that

these threshold minima do not represent the mean, expected, or target workloads for a given category for a given faculty position. Instead, they represent the very minimum expectation for a faculty member. A faculty member receiving “Poor” ratings in any category over three consecutive years will trigger a review by the Executive Committee that will consider modifying the faculty member’s workload; this review must include a conversation with the faculty member in question to understand their individual circumstances and how their workload could be modified to suit their strengths. Other requests to modify faculty workload may be initiated by a faculty member by contacting the Executive Committee as described above. Normally this request would take place soon after the end of a merit review cycle, but may occur at any time. Decisions on such a request will be made via majority vote of the Executive Committee; in the case of a tied vote, the final decisions rests with the Department Chair.

Faculty with Joint Appointments

Workload distribution of faculty with joint appointments in other departments throughout the College and University, but whose tenure lines are within MES, shall be evaluated using the same criteria and following the same procedures for faculty that are 100% within the Department of MES, as set forth in this document. All work activity for those faculty shall be included in their annual reporting of workload distribution, regardless of the department in which that work was carried out. The workload distribution of faculty with joint appointments in MES whose tenure lines are not within MES shall be evaluated by the department that holds their tenure line and not by MES.

Amendments to MES full-time faculty workload policy

The Department of MES Full-time Faculty Workload Policy will be reviewed annually (or as otherwise needed) by the Department Executive Committee and Department Chair. Should the Department Executive Committee, during its annual review of the Department of MES Full-time Faculty Workload Policy, deem that a modification(s) is needed to the policy, the modification(s) will be brought forth for full discussion and vote at the next monthly departmental faculty meeting. If the motion is approved by majority vote, the modification will be added to the policy, and the revised policy will be forwarded to the Dean of the College of Science and the Office of the Provost for consideration. If approved by the Dean and the Provost, the modification will be added to the workload policy with the date of modification, and the updated policy will then be electronically distributed to all MES faculty members, the Dean of the College of Science, and the Office of the Provost.

Dissemination of workload policy document

The MES Full-time Faculty Workload Policy will be distributed annually (via electronic format) to all full-time faculty members at the start of each calendar year in order to maintain synchronicity with the annual merit review cycle. The document will also be made available to full-time faculty members by written request through the MES Main Administrative Office. The Department Chair will communicate the following year’s workload distribution to each full-time faculty member in their annual review letter. A current copy of the Department of MES Full-time Faculty Workload Policy will also be provided to the Dean of the College of Science and to the Office of the Provost at the start of each calendar year.

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